

Congregational Study: Luke's Epiphany

January 21, 2025

Home Study: Luke 4:38-41

INTRODUCTION

One of the great blessings we enjoy, as Christians living in this day and age, is modern medicine. We are the beneficiaries of many spectacular advances in the medical field. Doctors have a wonderful array of treatments, surgeries, and medicines for many diseases, illnesses, and medical conditions.

Despite all these advances, though, one thing we can all count on in life is that we will struggle with physical woes. People continue to live with cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and even inconveniences like seasonal allergies. Even the healthiest person among us has certain ailments and pains. Our bodies break down eventually, and no one lives forever. You may have the best team of doctors in the world; but, in the end, sickness and suffering, to some degree, will find their way into your life.

Imagine a person comes into our church one day, and that person is able to heal all of our diseases. He simply speaks a word, or lays a hand on a sick person, and that sickness is gone. What would your reaction be?

TODAY'S READING

Before reading our story for today, take a moment to think about people you know who are going through various medical concerns. Keep those people in your mind as you read Luke 4:38-41.

Luke tells us, first, that Jesus made a visit to the house of Simon (later known as Peter). A member of the family was ill with a fever, and Luke says "they appealed to him (Jesus) on her behalf."

What does this appeal tell us about how Simon and his family viewed Jesus? Did they have a measure of confidence in Jesus' ability to do miracles? Do you suppose, at this point, they had a fully-formed understanding of Jesus' divinity? Or had they simply heard and seen enough to know that Jesus had some special power to heal?

Notice how Luke describes what happens next. "He stood over her and rebuked the fever ..."

Why did Jesus stand over the woman? Does Jesus' posture exhibit some type of authority? If you were "rebuking" a sickness in someone you know, what kind of words would you use?

Do you imagine that it was easy for people back then to come to an understanding of the kind of authority that Jesus was demonstrating, as he went around healing people? Is there a difference in believing in Jesus as a person with healing power, and believing in Jesus as the true Son of God? What might have kept people from believing the latter?

After the healing of Simon's mother-in-law, Luke tells us that many others were healed by Jesus. His power was extraordinary, and news of these miracles must have spread far and wide. The Lord cast out demons, too. He exhibited power over physical illnesses and medical conditions, but Jesus had authority over the spiritual forces of evil, as well.

How is it that the demons Jesus cast out were aware of his true identity as the Son of God, when not all of the people grasped this? Do you think the demons were expressing fear and foreboding when they cried out, "You are the Son of God"? Or were they expressing worship and faith?

Jesus commanded the demons to be silent. He wanted for the people to come to faith on their own, and to gain an understanding of his divinity with God's help. Throughout the remainder of his ministry, this would be an ongoing struggle for the people of his day. Would they accept Jesus as the divine Son of God, or reject his claims to divinity?

For the people you know who are sick or ill, say a prayer that they come to know Jesus' healing in their bodies, but also – and especially -- in their souls.

PRAYER

Jesus, mighty Healer, I rejoice at your unlimited power. You have control over all things in this world and in the next. Lay your healing hands on all those who are suffering, and grant them restoration and wholeness, according to your supremely wise will. For those nearing the end of their earthly lives, help them to endure and persevere in faith. Amen.